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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to investigate what suggestions for a biblical doctrine of the authority of Scripture the New Testament offers in the way in which it uses Scripture and how these suggestions can be made fruitful dogmatically.

I. The first chapter deals in its beginning with the influence which the structure of the Old Testament canon exercises in the use which the New Testament makes of it. Thereafter the place of the Septuagint as interpretative translation of the Old Testament is pointed out. It is maintained that notwithstanding the similarity with the rabbis in the interpretation of Scripture there is a decisive difference; this is caused by the proclamation of Jesus as the Christ, which determines the way in which the New Testament uses the data of the Old Testament both in form and content. Already in apostolical times, the authority of the gospel as testimony of Jesus comes up to that of the Old Testament. Not long afterwards the words of the apostles get the same authority. In the first centuries the authority of the Bible is consolidated. Related to this formation of the canon, but independent of it, the faith of the church is formulated. The church becomes the supreme authority to determine the right interpretation of Scripture and to safeguard its authority. It is not until the Reformation, that Scripture is seen as the sole source of God's revelation for men. The twofold fight against Rome and the Anabaptists forces the Reformation to develop its doctrine of the authority of Scripture. This is to be seen specifically in its formulation of the doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* and its description of the attributes of Scripture. After the 16th century the two extremes of a rationalistic and a mechanical-biblicistic view of Scripture become predominant. In the 18th and 19th century historical analysis is pursued; at the same time faith in its subjective character is increasingly stressed. The 20th century sees two new attempts to restore the authority of Scripture while preserving the positive attainments of historical criticism. Bultmann tries to rediscover the original intention of the biblical testimony freed from its mythological form and to translate it into categories which

are understandable to modern man. Barth gives a place to the proclaimed Word in the work of the Holy Spirit side by side with the written and revealed Word and upholds the absoluteness of the authority of Scripture including its human factors. In this situation it is important to see whether the use made of Scripture in the New Testament is relevant to and throws any light upon present day dogmatic thinking. This can also be valuable in view of the Ecumenical Movement; protestant theology has the obligation of explaining how it intends to uphold the absolute authority of Scripture in our time.

II. In the second chapter the use made of the Old Testament in each of the New Testament writings is examined. Rabbinical and apocalyptical elements are apparently used, but they are made subservient to the message of Christ. In this way the casuistry of rabbinism and the exuberant symbolism of later jewish apocalyptic literature is overcome. Four main lines can be traced which are of remaining significance both in material and formal respect.

1. In the first place the proclaiming character of Scripture comes to the fore. The books of the Old Testament are taken as written down preaching which wants to be proclaimed anew. The situation in which this is done is one of the factors which determines the way Scripture is used. The message which the Old Testament preaches, points to the saving acts of God done in history.

2. In the second place it is significant how much the structure of the Old Testament is respected. The *Thora* is most often quoted or referred to; the *Nebiim* follow, and the *Ketubim* are quoted least. The New Testament returns always again to the great revelatory events, specifically the theophanies, as the saving acts of God.

3. In the third place it is striking how emphatically the entire Scripture is placed in the category of fulfilment. The divine „ought” is decisive for the course of the history of salvation. The New Testament finds its place in the fulfilment of God's work of redemption side by side with the Old Testament.

4. The fourth characteristic is the differentiation of the authority in Scripture. All stress is placed upon divine salvation coming to the world. Historical events are told in their relation to the acts of God. And the commandments and rules are the concretion of man's responsibility to salvation in a particular time and situation. In this way the authority of Scripture is primary where it refers to salvation. Its authority regarding facts of history is based upon this. And its *paraenetical* authority is embedded in its historical authority.

These four conclusions can be drawn from the use made of Scripture in Scripture itself.

III. In the third chapter these conclusions are developed dogmatically.

A. The fact that the purpose of Scripture is to proclaim the acts of God in history offers the basic pattern for the authority of Scripture, in which four excesses have to be rejected. 1. The *biblicistic excess* forgets this proclaiming character and thereby falls into: a mechanistic view of inspiration; an abuse of the Bible as lawcode; a negation of the human factor in Scripture; a quoting of isolated texts; the use of harmonization to do away with difficulties and contradictions. 2. The *dualistic excess* is also the result of a disregard of the proclaiming nature of Scripture. It is in all its forms an attempt to separate the divine and human side and to assign to each side what belongs to it. „Partial dualism” makes the distinction between the inspired and not-inspired writings. „Dualism-in-degree” determines the degree of inspiration of the various parts of the Bible. „Formal dualism” separates the important content from the unimportant form. „Material dualism” searches out the religious or religious-ethical elements in the motley totality of Scripture. If Scripture is recognized as message, all these dualistic attacks upon its unity become unnecessary and are exposed as harmful aberrations. 3. The *historical excess* sees the Bible as a history book. All reports are received as accurate historical statements; the chronology is accepted literally; no distinction is made between „fact” and „saving act”. This too originates in neglecting the proclaiming character of Scripture. 4. In the *subjectivistic excess* the *kerygma* is disconnected from history in which the proclaimed acts of God took place. The Christ of faith is separated from the Jesus of history. The saving acts of God are changed to eternal truths.

B. There is in the canon a certain parallelism in the structure of the Old Testament and the New Testament: both are built around a number of saving acts of God in history and Jesus Christ is the centre in His essential revelation of God. The recognition of this structure is important for the understanding of the basic rule of the reformation: that Scripture interprets itself. Through this rule the attributes of Scripture are seen in a perspective, which emphasizes their usefulness for the interpretation. Of the traditional *affectiones* the *auctoritas* is no real attribute, but it is the presupposition for all attributes, to wit: the *autopistia*, *necessitas*, *perspicuitas*, *sufficiens* (or *perfectio*) of Holy Scripture. They can only function when the structure of Scripture as the message of salvation is recognized.

C. The fact that Scripture is fulfilled, implies that it is closed in regard to the past, but open in regard to the future. What is written, is complete in Christ. At the same time it goes out into the world as His message. The Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ (the first *pleroma*). The whole Scripture of Old and New Testament together

looks forward to the Christ, who shall come in glory (the second and final *pleroma*). The Bible in all its parts proclaims and expects the fulfilment which Christ brings. This fact has several consequences. 1. It is of importance for the problem of the unity and diversity of all Scripture. Persons, words, events, situations, nature play their part in bringing the fullness of Christ; herein their unity lies. The divine and the human are so intertwined that they cannot be separated. 2. The relation of Old and New Testament is also placed in a new light. They are complementary to each other. They collaborate in the fullness of salvation in mutual indispensability. 3. Moreover, the fulfilment gives an eschatological character to Scripture. The fullness is a new beginning. With the *pleroma* the new aeon begins. This is a dynamic element in the authority of Scripture. The Bible is en route in the great pilgrimage towards the fullness of God. 4. Herein preaching plays a decisive role. In proclaiming the scriptural message, the preaching points to Christ and in this way the *pleroma* of salvation is coming.

D. In the differentiation of authority in Scripture salvation receives the main emphasis; the laws and rules, yes the whole *paraenesis* is placed in a historical frame and both history and the commandments are drawn into the orbit of salvation. Thus the old question about the meaning of Scripture is answered in a new way. This meaning is only understood when the different accents of authority are maintained. The message which the commandments and admonitions give is heard only in its historical context. And the message of history is preparation, explanation and recommendation of God's acts which are done for our salvation. Law and gospel in their interrelation are also in a certain equilibrium, when the scriptural accents in the authority of Scripture are recognized. History is the link which connects salvation and the commandments. The three of them have their own place and authority. The fact that Scripture is temporally determined is a positive factor: the *paraenesis* is always given in an actual historical situation. In this concreteness its divine authority is manifested. And finally, the scriptural data cannot be used as prooftexts directly, literally; it is always necessary to see them in their relation to the mysterious centre of God's gracious dealing with the world. The history of the Bible is grouped around that centre; the commandments and the rules stand around it in a wider circle. The appeal to Scripture is an appeal to God, who speaks to man in his situation still today. The God of salvation is the God of history and also the God of the commandments.